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SUBJECT: FOOD AID VS. FOOD SECURITY: AN OPPORTUNITY IN THE GULF

REF: A. RIYADH 486 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. DOHA 268 (NOTAL)

KEY POINTS

-- Embassy appreciates talking points and public diplomacy materials made available in support of the Administration's efforts to promote food security.

-- Missing from those points, and our efforts, however, is a strategy for engaging wealthy nations with little agricultural production that are seeking food security for themselves.

-- Gulf countries like Qatar are a prime example of nations for whom food security is a vital national security interest, but whose arid lands produce virtually no agriculture.

-- Supporting partnerships between Gulf countries and American farmers to advance their own food security agendas would not only constitute a major boon for our farmers, but would also put the USG in a better position to partner with these countries in pursuing our own food security strategy with poor nations in the Arab world and beyond.

-- Gulf countries have expressed their strong desire to work with us on a project-specific basis rather than continue to be pressed by "tin cup" requests (reftels). Food security is an excellent issue on which to start.

END KEY POINTS

Food Aid vs. Food Security

[1](#)1. (U) The White House, Department, and Department of Agriculture have effectively highlighted the USG's strong commitment to reducing hunger worldwide through development assistance and partnerships. The talking points and public diplomacy materials made available to posts have been unprecedented in their accessibility and comprehensiveness.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Missing from our discussions both public and private, however, has been a focus on food security versus traditional food aid. Wealthy Gulf countries such as Qatar, blessed with oil and natural gas wealth, but with some of the most arid land on earth, do not need assistance to feed their people, but nonetheless view food security as a top national security concern. That is why Qatar and others have in recent years begun to invest in land in other countries such as Pakistan and Kenya in an attempt to secure food supplies for their growing populations in the decades to come.

¶3. (SBU) Qatar has established an agency to pursue its food security agenda through not just outright land ownership in foreign countries, but also through investments and partnerships. Its director attended the recent UN discussions on food security, and plans to meet the Governor of Oregon to discuss ways Oregonian farmers could help Qatar and the rest of the Arab world meet their food security goals. There is real opportunity here for a new partnership on this issue.

¶4. (SBU) As part of our strategy to promote food security worldwide, we should engage countries like Qatar by facilitating business partnerships with American farmers, for whom the Gulf could be an increasingly important export destination.

¶5. (SBU) We should also seek to parlay the Gulf countries' strong interest in food security into a partnership on development assistance that would include improving agricultural production and humanitarian food assistance in poor countries in the Arab world and in Africa. Qatar and the other Gulf nations already provide development and humanitarian assistance; with the help of American farmers and in coordination with the USG, we may be able to direct that assistance in ways that become a "force multiplier" for our own efforts.

¶6. (SBU) Gulf nations have often expressed fatigue over our frequent "tin cup" requests for various causes and the Qataris have recommended that we instead approach them on a project-by-project basis. Embassy recommends testing a new approach along these lines by finding ways to combine the

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Gulf countries' generosity, the bounty of American farmers, and the USG's global food security agenda.

¶7. (SBU) To do that, however, we must begin making food security in the Gulf countries -- not just food assistance -- a focus of our dialogue and efforts.
LeBaron